



Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
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Woonsocket Middle School

WOONSOCKET

THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

April 15, 2005



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The school accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Purpose and Limits of This Report

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Woonsocket Middle School from April 11 - 15, 2005.

The SALT visit report makes every effort to provide your school with a valid, specific picture of how well your students are learning. The report also portrays how the teaching in your school affects learning, and how the school supports learning and teaching. The purpose of developing this information is to help you make changes in teaching and the school that will improve the learning of your students. The report is valid because the team's inquiry is governed by a protocol that is carefully designed to make it possible for visit team members to make careful judgments using accurate evidence. The careful exercise of professional judgment makes the findings useful for school improvement because these judgments identify where the visit team thinks the school is doing well, and where it is doing less well.

The major questions the team addressed were:

How well do students learn at Woonsocket Middle School?

How well does the teaching at Woonsocket Middle School affect learning?

How well does Woonsocket Middle School support learning and teaching?

The following features of this visit are at the heart of the report:

Members of the visit team are primarily teachers and administrators from Rhode Island public schools. The majority of team members are teachers. The names and affiliations of the team members are listed at the end of the report.

The team sought to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school is unique and the team has tried to capture what makes Woonsocket Middle School distinct.

The team did not compare this school to any other school.

When writing the report, the team deliberately chose words that it thought would best convey its message to the school, based on careful consideration of what it had learned about the school.

The team reached consensus on each conclusion, each recommendation, and each commendation in this report.

The team made its judgment explicit.

This report reflects only the week in the life of the school that was observed and considered by this team. The report is not based on what the school plans to do in the future or on what it has done in the past.

This school visit is supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as a component of School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT). To gain the full advantages of a peer visiting system, RIDE deliberately did not participate in the active editing of this SALT visit report. That was carried out by the team's Chair with the support of Catalpa. Ltd.

The team closely followed a rigorous protocol of inquiry that is rooted in *Practice-based Inquiry*® (Catalpa Ltd)¹. The detailed *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit, 2nd Edition* describes the theoretical constructs behind the SALT visit and stipulates the many details of the visit procedures. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are available at www.Catalpa.org. Contact Rick Richards at (401) 222-4600 x 2194 or ride0782@ride.ri.net for further information about the SALT visit protocol.

SALT visits undergo rigorous quality control. Catalpa Ltd. monitors each visit and determines whether the report can be endorsed. Endorsement assures the reader that the team and the school followed the visit protocol. It also assures that the conclusions and the report meet specified standards.

Sources of Evidence

The Sources of Evidence that this team used to support its conclusions are listed in the appendix.

The team spent a total of over two hundred and two hours in direct classroom observation. Most of this time was spent in observing complete lessons or classes. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once. Additionally, the team spent more than ninety-four hours interviewing faculty and staff.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of thirty hours in team meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time does not include the time the team spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

The team did agree by consensus that every conclusion in this report is:

- ◆ *Important enough to include in the report*
- ◆ *Supported by the evidence the team gathered during the visit*
- ◆ *Set in the present, and*
- ◆ *Contains the judgment of the team*

Using the Report

This report is designed to have value to all audiences concerned with how Woonsocket Middle School can improve student learning. However, the most important audience is the school itself.

¹ *Practice-based Inquiry*® is a registered trademark of Catalpa Ltd.

How your school improvement team reads and considers the report is the critical first step. RIDE will provide a SALT Fellow to lead a follow-up session with the school improvement team to help start the process. With support from the Woonsocket School District School Improvement Coordinator and from SALT fellows, the school improvement team should carefully decide what changes it wants to make in learning, teaching, and the school, and amend its School Improvement Plan to reflect these decisions.

The Woonsocket School District, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Woonsocket Middle School as it works to strengthen its performance.

Any reader of this report should consider the report as a whole. A reader who only looks at recommendations misses important information.

2. PROFILE OF WOONSOCKET MIDDLE SCHOOL

Woonsocket Middle School, located in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, first opened in 1915 as Woonsocket High School. In 1920, the school was expanded and an adjacent building was built to house Woonsocket Junior High School. Subsequent changes include the connecting of these buildings with further additions and the removal of students in grades 10-12 to a separate facility at another location. Between 1992 and 1997 the final changes were made, as 6th grade students were included in the renamed Woonsocket Middle School, and all 9th grade students joined the other upper grade students at Woonsocket High School.

There are currently 1551 students in grades 6-8 at Woonsocket Middle School. Three hundred-and-seventy-seven of these students (24%) receive special education services. Forty-six students (3%) receive ESL services. Sixty percent of the students are white, 24% are Hispanic, 9% are African-American, 7% are Asian/Pacific Islander, and less than 1% is Native American. Seven-hundred-and-sixty-five students (49%) receive free lunch, and 193 (12%) receive reduced price lunch. The average daily attendance rate for all students at this school is 93%.

The administrative staff at Woonsocket Middle School consists of one principal and three assistant principals. Supporting the administrators are a special education chair, a guidance department chair, four guidance counselors, an encore team leader, four subject area coordinators, a conflict resolution counselor, an attendance officer, a psychologist, two social workers, two nurses (one full-time, one part-time), a full-time technology coordinator, a part-time computer technician, two speech therapists (one full-time, one part-time) and an in-school suspension teacher.

The teaching staff numbers 158 teachers, teacher assistants and support staff. There are 14 language arts, mathematics, science and social studies teachers. Additionally, there are 27 special education teachers, seven physical education/health teachers, three ESL teachers, three music teachers and two reading teachers. Further teaching staff include two general art teachers, two health teachers, two library/media specialists and two reading specialists. Finally, a ceramics teacher, a consumer science teacher, a French teacher, a keyboarding teacher and a Spanish teacher round out the teaching staff. Thirty teaching assistants support this staff.

Woonsocket Middle School consists of 10 departments, and students in core subjects are housed in teams. The team structure includes five teams at grade 6, four teams in grade 7, four teams in grade 8, one split team in grades 7/8, one ESL team and three special education teams. Students at this school are leveled for instruction in the core subjects at five levels: accelerated, A, B, C and developmental. Special needs students, who are not in self-contained classes, receive instruction in general education classes with the support of either resource teachers or an inclusion teacher, or they are placed in a fully integrated setting. ESL students receive instruction in one of three levels – beginner 1, beginner 2, and intermediate. Advanced ESL students receive instruction in the general education classes.

The school offers its students a variety of programs, both during and after school, to support their academic and social growth and development. Programs that occur during the day include band, chorus, 'Primetime-Springboard' (a mathematics program), 'Project Citizen' and 'Read 180.' Also during the day outside agencies provide character-building and educational support programs that include the Crusades, Educational Talent Search and City Year. The school has a "Temporary Learning Environment" to support the expectations of school behavior and student learning needs. After-school programs include Junior Beta Club – a national Honor Society, Be Fit Walking program, SMILE – a science and math club, chorus and band, and other clubs voted on annually by students. The school also provides students opportunities to compete in several intramural and interscholastic sports.

Current initiatives at Woonsocket Middle School include the Institute for Learning, Assertive Discipline and various other professional development initiatives. The school received grants for math: Primetime with Springboard Assessment; for after-school programs: a 21st Century grant; and for the library/media center: a Get Real Library grant.

3. PORTRAIT OF WOONSOCKET MIDDLE SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Called a “school in crisis” by some and the “Achilles heel of the district” by others, Woonsocket Middle School is neither. Rather, this large urban middle school—the largest in New England—is simply a large and complex school that tries to deliver on its promise, as stated in the school mission statement, “to effectively serve the needs of a diverse student body.” Unfortunately, this mission is not currently being met.

The heart of the school is the more than 1,500 students who come here every day to learn. The students say that they like this school and want to be here and that they are eager to learn, achieve and prepare themselves for the future. They find comfort in their friends and appreciate those teachers and administrators who care about them and their learning. They appreciate lessons that challenge them and actively engage them as learners. Unfortunately, these lessons are few and far between, and students ask their teachers to “teach us more.” Students are provided with few opportunities to practice and develop higher-order thinking and skills and, as a result, most do not read, write or problem solve successfully.

There are “pockets of excellence” among the faculty. These truly dedicated and driven teachers design effective and relevant lessons and push their students to learn. However, most teachers do not provide rigorous and purposeful instruction or have high expectations for all students. These teachers maintain a style of instruction that is rooted in busy work. They “assign” rather than teach and ask their students to perform low-level tasks that do not challenge them. Teachers are frustrated by what they perceive to be poor student discipline and a negative school climate, but they do not recognize or accept the crucial role their instruction and classroom management play in creating this climate.

The new administrative team has goals and visions for high student achievement and a positive environment and learning culture. District leadership has empowered this capable team to make the changes they feel are necessary to move the school forward. While the administrative team has plans for improvement, it has not been able to communicate this effectively or in a way that will bring the faculty and staff on board. As a result, considerable tension exists between the administrators and the faculty, and this is a real impediment to progress and improved student learning.

Other school-wide challenges also beset this school. Pervasive homogenous grouping practices cripple student learning and solidify the culture of low expectations for students who are not in the top groups. Valuable instructional time is wasted through ‘homeroom activity’ periods that resemble study halls and content area reading classes in which instruction often does not occur. Both the district and the school have recognized the need to include students with special needs in the regular education classes, but this effort remains a work in progress. Both parents and the community remain largely untapped critical resources. The size of the school building and the large student population impede efforts to personalize the school to meet the needs of its diverse learners.

The school’s motto, “Striving for Excellence” is negated by the air of mistrust, frustration, inconsistent teaching and low expectations that permeate Woonsocket Middle School. Unless faculty and administrative leaders forge a working relationship, the students and their learning will continue to suffer.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Conclusions

The majority of students at Woonsocket Middle School write poorly across all content areas. They do not properly use the basic writing conventions to produce quality written work. They also do not have the skills necessary to create extensive writing pieces suitable for their grade levels. Their writing often lacks coherent structure, and students do not satisfactorily develop their ideas, maintain a clear focus or support their ideas with evidence. One reason students write poorly is because they do not practice writing often enough. They typically do not write more than simple sentences, short answers in response to questions or class notes. Students do not regularly write multiple drafts, which they then have the opportunity to revise and improve. Some students do write effectively. As evidenced by the scores on the New Standards Reference Examination subtest for writing effectiveness, forty-seven percent of the students met or exceeded the standard, but this effective writing is not the norm. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, classroom textbooks, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, 2004 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results)*

Reading is a struggle for many students. Although some can read fairly well at a level of basic comprehension and can connect their reading to their lives, most have inadequate skills in analyzing and interpreting texts. This is confirmed by the New Standards Reference Examination reading subtest for analysis and interpretation in which eighty-three percent of the students failed to meet the standard. Some students, especially those in the top groups, say that they like to read at home and in school, particularly when they can choose their own books. However, many other students do not find reading enjoyable and read only when their teacher assigns them to do so. Some students do not do even this minimal reading. These students find reading intimidating because they cannot do it well, and they lack the strategies to read beyond recalling basic facts. They do not read with understanding at their grade levels. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students and parents, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, classroom textbooks)*

Students do not solve problems successfully with accuracy and autonomy. They do not use higher order thinking skills required to solve complex problems. They do not look for the answers themselves, but wait for their teachers to give them the answers, or they look for simple solutions and procedures. The Woonsocket Middle School Self Study report confirms this particular concern: “little higher level thinking is evident and activities that require students to analyze or interpret data or text are minimal.” Students often do not attempt to solve difficult problems because they do not know how to begin or which strategies to use. The results of the New Standards Reference Examination subtest for mathematics problem solving support these findings: ninety percent of the students did not meet the standard. Students’ failure to solve problems extends to interpersonal conflicts with adults and peers that result in disruptions and negative consequences. This leads to an atmosphere that is not conducive to learning. In classes where students receive guidance in solving problems they begin to develop these abilities. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, district administrators, and parents, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, school improvement plan, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, 2004 SALT Survey report, Woonsocket Middle School Self Study Report)*

Students rise and fall to the level of expectation set for them. In classrooms where there is structure and clear and consistent expectations for behavior and relevant schoolwork, students engage in the tasks at hand. Without these, students resist learning and are disengaged, distracted and disruptive. Students say that they want more challenge, consistency in discipline and classroom routines, and varied learning activities. Students, parents, teachers, and school and district administrators—all say that the absence of high expectations and academic rigor deprives all students of the opportunity to learn and achieve. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, school improvement plan, 2004 SALT Survey report)*

Although some students report concerns about their physical safety, most generally feel safe at this school. They say that the size of the school, the large number of students, and the crowded halls and cafeteria pose potential problems. They create their own mechanisms for dealing with this and learn to get by. Despite all of this, most students like coming to this school. They like to learn, but they look to the adults to ensure their safety. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students and teachers, 2004 SALT Survey report, reviewing district and school policies)*

and practices, 2003 Information Works)

Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning

Students:

- ◆ *Do not have the necessary skills and strategies to read, write or problem solve well*
- ◆ *Do not have sufficient opportunities to practice high level reading, writing and problem solving*
- ◆ *Participate in and learn primarily from simple and routine tasks*
- ◆ *Want more challenge and varied learning activities*
- ◆ *Become distracted and disruptive when not challenged, held to high expectations and actively engaged in learning.*

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

Conclusions

Far too many teachers in all content areas do not teach their students how to write well. These teachers do not have high and clear expectations for student writing, and many are not motivated or committed to teach writing. Moreover, teachers do not require their students to write on a regular basis, and they do not teach the strategies necessary to meet the standard. Their expectations for writing require little more from students than brief responses and basic information, not quality writing. They do not demand writing that includes critical thinking, the development and support of arguments and ideas, or the proper use of conventions. Much teacher feedback to students is only checks or letter grades, and this does not provide the level of detail or direction to help students write better. Further, teachers say that students in the lower levels cannot write well, and they do not require more than simple responses from them or for them to do more than complete fill-in-the-blank worksheets. While some teachers teach students how to write well—particularly those in the sixth grade, ESL classes, and some English classes—most teachers do not. *(following students, observing classes, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with students and teachers, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, 2004 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results)*

Most teachers do not teach reading. They assign reading materials to their students, but they do not provide explicit instruction in how to read. They do not teach their students the habits of proficient readers such as how to ask questions and understand for basic and deeper meaning of what they read. Some teachers in sixth grade, ESL, special needs and English explicitly teach reading strategies by modeling and guiding their students' practice. These teachers teach their students how to use the tools to become better readers. However, most content area teachers say that they are not responsible or qualified to teach reading. To the detriment of their students, these teachers do not accept their professional responsibility to teach reading in either their content or their reading classes. Instead, they continuously assign and assess reading without providing any support for their students to learn from their reading. In some reading classes, teachers do not teach reading at all. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students and parents, talking with students, teachers, parents and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, classroom textbooks, district and school policies and practices)*

Most teachers do not teach problem solving well. Teachers in all content areas assign problems to their students, but many give them the solution before allowing them to struggle with a problem. These teachers do not systematically teach their students how to select or use strategies. They do not provide ample time for their students to work out solutions independently or to persevere in their problem solving. They do not encourage students to share their thought process publicly or to find multiple solutions to problems. They do not regularly use reading and writing activities and cooperative group work to engage their students in improving their ability to problem solve. The Woonsocket Middle School Self Study Report of classroom practices confirms this finding: “of critical concern is that critical thinking enhancement practices are reported to be taking place only monthly.” However, some math and science teachers teach their students strategies to solve problems and provide opportunities for them to generate solutions and learn from these experiences. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, talking with students, teachers, parents, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, Woonsocket Middle School Self Study Report, classroom textbooks)*

While “pockets of excellence” exist, most teachers do not design purposeful, rigorous lessons or have high expectations for student learning. They do not design challenging lessons that require students to understand and apply concepts, complete multiple step problems, or engage in deep and reflective thinking. Too often the assignment of exercises and worksheets substitutes for actual teaching. Often there do not appear to be clear goals or objectives for teachers’ lessons. Teachers say that their students cannot do more difficult work, because they “will have a meltdown;” whereas students want teachers to “teach us more.” *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2004 SALT Survey report)*

Most teachers’ lack of effective classroom management results in reactive discipline and a loss of instructional time. These teachers begin their classes late and end them early. They do not provide students with clear classroom routines and structures or actively engage them in learning. They also do not de-escalate problems, but confront students and over-refer them to the office. They often ignore problem behaviors and hope they will just go away. Teachers say that students run the school and are out of control, but in classes where management is strong, these problems are often defused and handled constructively within the classroom. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, parents, and school administrators)*

Commendations for Woonsocket Middle School

Pockets of instructional excellence throughout the school

Recommendations for Woonsocket Middle School

Hold all students at all levels to high and clear expectations.

Deliver explicit instruction across the content areas in reading, writing and problem solving.

Provide students sufficient classroom time to practice reading, writing and problem solving.

Accept the professional responsibility to teach reading in all content areas, and participate in necessary professional development to be able to do this successfully.

Design purposeful and rigorous lessons to motivate and engage students.

Model strategies and encourage students to use them to develop critical thinking and higher order skills.

Manage classroom instruction and time more efficiently to improve teaching for learning, and minimize class and school discipline issues.

Provide more frequent and in-depth feedback to help students revise and improve their work in order to raise their achievement.

Recommendations for Woonsocket School District

Provide professional development to help teachers better teach reading, writing and problem solving, and connect this to daily classroom instruction.

Support teachers by providing them with effective strategies and resources to improve their classroom management, and class practices, as well as their school discipline practices.

Support teachers and hold them accountable for consistently providing instruction that is characterized by high expectations and academic rigor.

6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

Conclusions

A toxic school climate exists at Woonsocket Middle School. This climate is charged with confusion, resentment and open hostility. Poor communication among the adults and their unwillingness to cooperate are the catalysts for this. As a result, the focus on students, effective instruction and academic achievement has been lost. Teachers are preoccupied with their resentment toward the new administration and the amount of change expected of them. The administrators are overwhelmed by discipline issues, the need to improve academic rigor and the implementation of their plan. While both sides point fingers at the other, neither seems to be able to find a common ground or a way to move this school forward. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers and school administrators, 2004 SALT Survey report)*

The new administrative team has a plan for progress at this school. These leaders want to create a positive environment for all, increase academic rigor, expectations and instructional time, and improve school-wide personalization through looping teams of student support services. District leaders say they have given this team free reign for a “bold new change.” They say the principal is an aggressive and bright leader with a strong work ethic. However, this leadership team has not been able to communicate its vision effectively to the faculty or to bring them on board. The staff says that their voices are not heard, and they are not regularly included in school-wide decision making. The administrators say their biggest challenge is overcoming the resistance of the many teachers “who have dug in their heels.” While some positive attempts at change have been made to improve school performance, the existence of this polarization continues to obstruct progress. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, and school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers and school administrators)*

Much valuable instructional time is wasted at Woonsocket Middle School. Formal instruction rarely occurs during the daily homeroom activity period. Some content area teachers do not regularly teach reading during their assigned reading periods, thus squandering even more instructional time. Furthermore, the school schedule, consisting of seven forty-two minute periods, results in excessive amounts of time being wasted in transit. Classes do not consistently begin or end on time. Also, time is lost through whole class bathroom breaks. *(following students, observing classes, observing the students outside of the classroom, meeting with school and district administrators, and talking with school administrators)*

Students with special needs and English Language Learners receive services with varying degrees of success and quality depending on the model used to deliver their instruction. Students in ESL, many self-contained special education classes and the sixth grade integrated team receive explicit and effective instruction in reading, writing and problem solving. These teachers set clear and high expectations for student performance resulting in student progress. Most students in inclusion classes, however, are not well served. These students are placed in lower level classes that often are characterized by disengaged and disruptive behavior. Teachers do not regularly have high expectations for these students or provide them with effective instruction. The minimal learning that takes place is a disservice to these students. Teachers say that they do not have the expertise to help these students succeed and need more training and support however, some teachers take the initiative and make this model work for their students. Far too many students throughout the school still receive inequitable education in self-contained settings. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators and parents, talking with students, teachers and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, school and district report cards)*

Despite a new code of conduct, both teachers and administrators inconsistently enforce discipline. Teachers say that discipline is out of control at this school. Administrators say that discipline takes up eighty percent of their time and that they routinely receive up to a thousand referrals a week. Many teachers believe that they are not supported by their administrators in maintaining control and proper student discipline. They say this undermines their authority. The administrators say that the teachers do not proactively address these problems in their classrooms, as a component of effective classroom management. The majority of students at this school, however, are friendly and reasonably well-behaved. They say they feel safe at this school. The disagreement about student discipline and effective solutions to discipline problems inhibits progress and contributes to the negative culture that exists at this school. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, parents and school administrators, 2004 SALT Survey report, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

Homogeneous grouping exists in many models throughout this school. This pervasive and crippling practice separates students into groups by perceived academic ability and creates an inequitable learning environment. This has a devastating impact, as many students are assigned to classes where the expectations are low and learning is by rote and where there is misbehavior and boredom. Students at all levels are denied the opportunity to interact and share in the learning process with the full diversity of their peers. Teachers say that students in the lower level groups cannot do equally challenging work, and therefore they do not assign it. This robs these students of the opportunity to develop their skills and receive an equal and useful education. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, parents and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2004 SALT Survey report, reviewing school improvement plan, district and school policies and practices)*

The physical facility is too large, and it is out-dated. It houses too many students and is not conducive to learning and teaching. While the district has worked for more than ten years to obtain a new school, this has not occurred. The lunchroom is seriously overcrowded, the library is too small to serve students' needs adequately, and the numerous stairways and narrow passages create unsupervised areas that make monitoring hallways challenging. The sheer size of this school contributes to its discipline and communication problems and prevents it from realizing its mission. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, parents, and school administrators, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

Parents are not involved in this school. While teachers and administrators say that parents are not available or interested in participating in the life of the school, most do not make sufficient overtures to involve or engage them. Parents do not volunteer in the school or its classrooms, and they are not often seen as necessary and equal partners in their children's learning. While the school has recently hired two parent coordinators to improve efforts in this area, a school-wide and strategic effort is not in place. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, parents and school administrators, 2004 SALT Survey report, reviewing school improvement plan, district and school policies and practices)*

Commendations for Woonsocket Middle School

Administrative team's plan for progress

Friendly, reasonably well-behaved students

ESL classrooms, many self-contained classrooms and sixth grade integrated team's effective instruction

Recommendations for Woonsocket Middle School

Work together to create a positive environment for all members of the school community.

Create and use channels of effective communication to move the school forward.

Find ways for the faculty and administrators to work together for educational improvement.

Maximize the use of instructional time.

Provide further training and support for more effective inclusion classrooms.

Practice clear and consistent discipline, as identified in the code of conduct, and ensure that everyone enforces it.

Eliminate homogeneous classrooms to create equitable learning opportunities.

Work with the Woonsocket School Department to obtain smaller and new facilities to personalize learning.

Create a parent involvement program that treats parents as equal partners in their children's education.

Recommendations for Woonsocket School Department

Work with the faculty and administrators to resolve and improve the pervasive negative climate that impedes learning and teaching for learning.

Continue to support the administrative team.

Work with the community of Woonsocket to provide new middle school facilities.

7. FINAL ADVICE TO WOONSOCKET MIDDLE SCHOOL

The SALT team recognizes the challenges of working in a school this size and encourages you to take steps to keep your students at the center of your work and at the heart of your decisions. Until a clear and shared vision among all members of the school community exists, your desires and strides for high academic achievement for all will not be realized.

Your students deserve an inspiring educational experience. Instill purposeful academic rigor in your classrooms and across all content areas, and raise the bar of expectations for everyone. Your students want to learn and call out to be challenged and engaged. Listen to them!

The faculty and administrators need sincerely and effectively to open the lines of communication. Both parties need to understand the other's perspective, keep each other informed, and find common ground. Only through these collaborative and essential actions will the necessary changes for improved student learning result.

Now is the time to do the work to find common ground. Reflect on your teaching and administrative practices, and come together as one team to serve the most important people in the school—the students. Your success in this endeavor holds the key to your students' futures.

ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

Woonsocket Middle School

April 15, 2005

Catalpa Ltd. monitors all SALT visits and examines each SALT visit team report to determine whether it should be endorsed as a legitimate SALT report. The endorsement decision is based on procedures and criteria specified in *Endorsing SALT Visit Team Reports*. (available on Catalpa website). Catalpa Ltd. bases its judgment about the legitimacy of a report on these three questions:

Did the SALT visit team and the host school conduct the visit in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the protocol for the visit?

Do the conclusions of the report meet the tests for conclusions specified in the visit protocol (important, accurate, set in present, shows the team's judgment)?

Does the report meet the tests for a report as specified in the visit protocol (fair, useful, and persuasive of productive action)?

Using the answers to these questions, the final decision to endorse the report answers the overall endorsement question: Is this a legitimate SALT team visit report? In order to make this determination, Catalpa weighs all the questions and issues that have been raised to decide whether a report is legitimate or not. While it is possible that a challenge related to one of the three questions listed above would be serious enough to withhold or condition the endorsement, it is more likely that issues serious enough to challenge a report's legitimacy will cut across the three questions.

While the SALT visit protocol requires that all SALT visits are conducted to an exceptionally high standard of rigor, visits are "real-life" events; it is impossible to control for all unexpected circumstances that might arise. The protocol for the conduct of the visit is spelled out in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs*, 1st edition.

Since unexpected circumstances might result in either the team or the school straying too far from the protocol for a visit, Catalpa monitors both the school and the team during a visit regarding the conduct of the visit.

Most often actual visit events or issues do not challenge a report's legitimacy and Catalpa's monitoring and endorsement is routine. A district administrator, principal, faculty member or parent may not like a report, or think it is too negative, or think the visit should have been conducted in a manner that is not consistent with the protocol. None of these represent a challenge to a report's legitimacy; concerns that might challenge an endorsement are based on events that stray too far from the protocol.

The Catalpa review of this visit and this report was routine.

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

- discussion with the chair about any issues related to the visit before it began
- daily discussion of any issues with the visit chair during the visit
- observation of two portions of the visit
- discussion with the principal regarding any concerns about the visit at the time of the visit
- thorough review of the report in both its pre-release and final version form

The findings from the review are:

1. This team was certified to meet team membership requirements by RIDE staff.
2. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair and conducted in a manner that is consistent with SALT Visit procedures.
3. The conclusions are legitimate SALT visit conclusions.
4. The report is a legitimate SALT visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



Thomas A. Wilson, Ed.D.

Catalpa Ltd.

May 11, 2005

REPORT APPENDIX

Sources of Evidence for This Report

In order to write this report the team examined test scores, student work, and other documents related to this school. The school improvement plan for Woonsocket Middle School was the touchstone document for the team. No matter how informative documents may be, however, there is no substitute for being at the school while it is in session—in the classrooms, in the lunchroom, and in the hallways. The team built its conclusions primarily from information about what the students, staff, and administrators think and do during their day. Thus, this visit allowed the team to build informed judgments about the teaching, learning, and support that actually takes place at Woonsocket Middle School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following sources of evidence:

- ◆ *direct classroom observation*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following nineteen students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with the following groups:*
 - teachers*
 - school improvement team*
 - school and district administrators*
 - students*
 - parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
 - district and school policies and practices*
 - records of professional development activities*
 - classroom assessments*
 - school improvement plan for Woonsocket Middle School*
 - district strategic plan*
 - 2004 SALT Survey report*
 - classroom textbooks*
 - 2003 Information Works!*
 - 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries*
 - 2004 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results*
 - School and District Report Cards*

Woonsocket Middle School Principal's Notes binder
Woonsocket Middle School Weekly Bulletins binder
Woonsocket Middle School Faculty handbook
Woonsocket Middle School Community Newsletter binder
Woonsocket Middle School School Improvement Team binder
Woonsocket Education Department Professional Development binder

State Assessment Results for Woonsocket Middle School

Assessment results create pieces of evidence that the visit team uses as it conducts its inquiry. The team uses this evidence to shape its efforts to locate critical issues for the school. It also uses this evidence, along with other evidence, to draw conclusions about those issues.

This school's results are from the latest available state assessment information. It is presented here in four different ways:

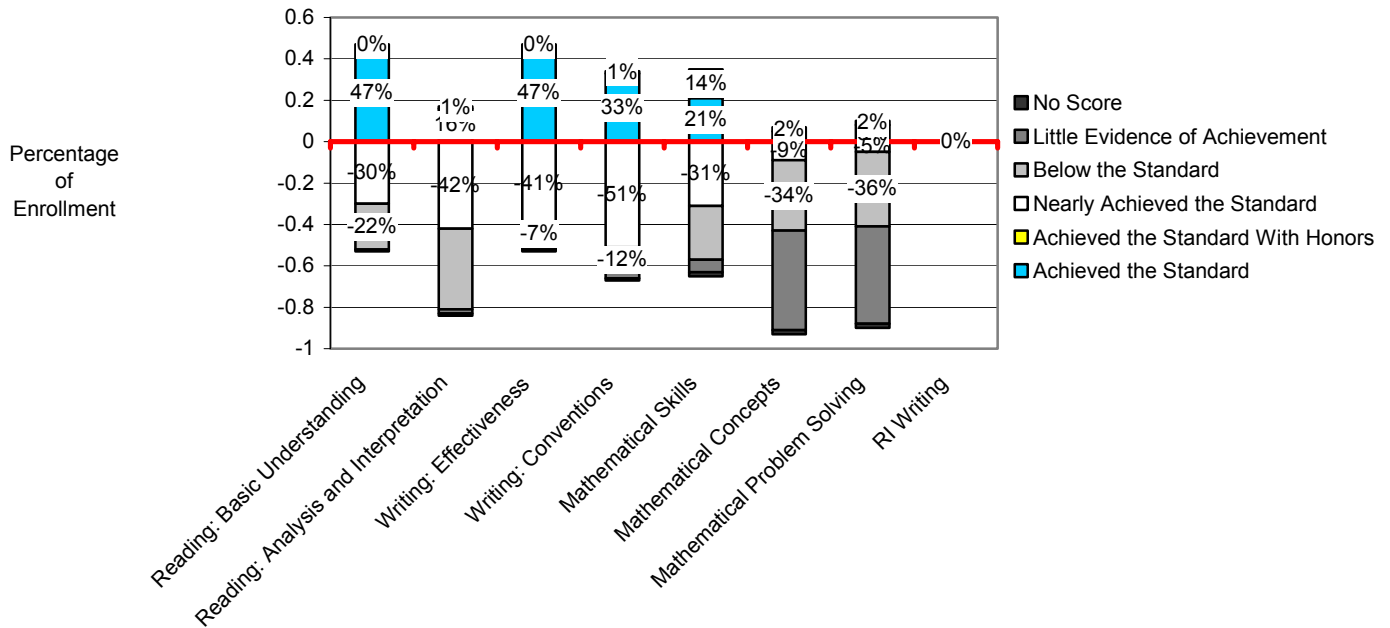
- ◆ *against performance standards;*
- ◆ *compared to similar students in the state;*
- ◆ *across student groups within the school;*
- ◆ *and over time.*

RESULTS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The first display shows how well the students do in relation to standards in English/Language Arts and mathematics. Student results are shown as the percentage of students taking the test whose score places them in the various categories at, above, or below the performance standard. Endorsed by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education in 1998, the tested standards can be found in the publication *New Standards Performance Standards*.

Table 1. 2003-2004 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments

Woonsocket Middle School State Assessment Results of 2004

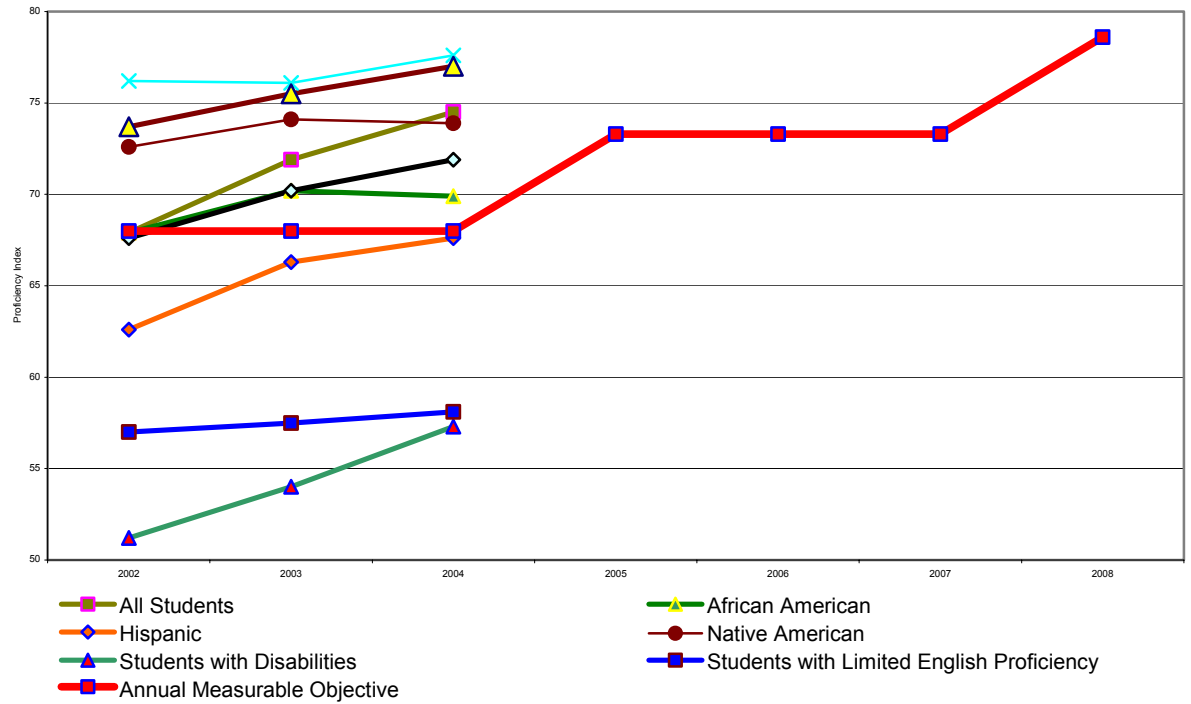


RESULTS ACROSS STUDENT GROUPS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

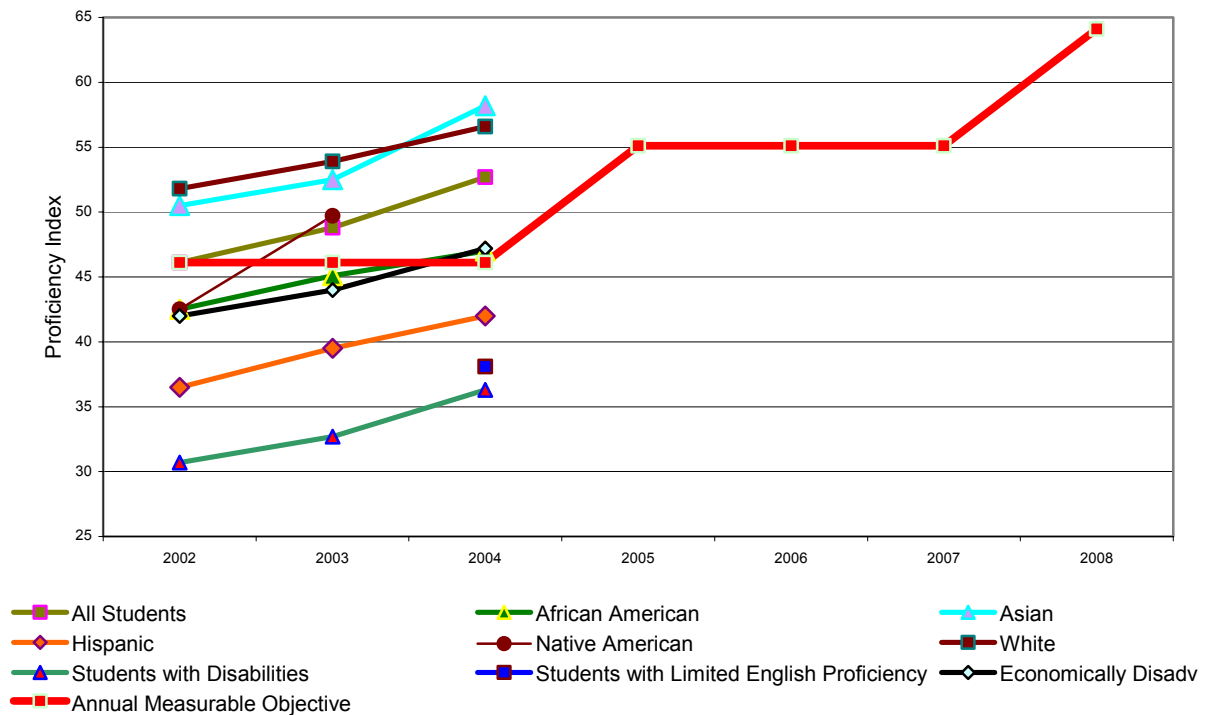
An important way to display student results is across different groups of students who are in the school. This display shows targets and index scores and reflects the new requirements of the No Child Left Behind federal legislation. Since breaking students into these smaller groups can result in groups becoming too small to show accurate results, this display shows groups with 45 or more students across three years of testing. Any student group whose index scores do not meet the targets set by RIDE require additional attention to close its performance gaps.

Table 2. 2002-2003 Student Results across Subgroups

Annual Proficiency, Woonsocket Middle School, Grade 8 ELA



Annual Proficiency, Woonsocket Middle School, Grade 8 Math



REPORT CARD FOR WOONSOCKET MIDDLE SCHOOL

This Report Card shows the performance of Woonsocket Middle School compared to the school's annual measurable objectives (AMO).

These report card scores describe Woonsocket Middle School as a school in need of improvement/insufficient progress.

Table 3. Report Card for Woonsocket Middle School

2004 Rhode Island School Report Card

Page 1 of 3

RI SCHOOL: WOONSOCKET MIDDLE SCHOOL

RI DISTRICT: WOONSOCKET

GRADE: 08

INDEX PROFICIENCY SCORE, 2002-04	ENGLISH LANG. ARTS TARGET SCORE: 68				MATHEMATICS TARGET SCORE: 46.1			
	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE
All Students	74.5	YES	74.4	80.3	52.7	YES	52.4	66.5
African Americans	69.9	YES	69.3	71.2	47	YES	46.3	49.5
Asian	77.6	YES	77.6	79.3	58.2	YES	58.2	64.9
Hispanic	67.6	YES††	67.6	69.5	42	NO	41.9	48.8
Native Americans	73.9	YES	73.9	76.7	*	YES	*	58.6
White	77	YES	76.8	84.4	56.6	YES	56.2	72.8
Students with Disabilities	57.3	YES†	56.6	63.3	36.3	YES†	35.5	46.8
Students with Limited English	58.1	NO	58.1	61	38.1	NO	38.1	43.3

Students who are Economically Disadvantaged	71.9	YES	71.5	70.8	47.2	YES	46.8	50.9
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PERCENT OF STUDENTS TESTED, 2002-04	Target: 95%				ATTENDANCE RATE	Target: 90%			
	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE		THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE
English Language Arts	99.6	YES	99.6	98.6		91.8	YES	91.8	93.6
Mathematics	99.5	YES	99.5	98.8					

TARGETS MET/MISSED, THIS SCHOOL		
	TARGETS MET	TARGETS MISSED
English Language Arts Index Score	8	1
Mathematics Index Score	7	2
Percent Tested	2	0
Attendance Rate	1	0

THIS SCHOOL IS CLASSIFIED AS:	
School in Need of Improvement/Insufficient Progress	

KEY: * Student group has too few students to calculate results.
† "Safe Harbor" - Student group has fallen short of the target but has made sufficient improvement over last year's score.
†† Student group has met the target based only on the most recent year of test results.

NOTE: For information on targets and classifications, please see [Quick Guide](#).

Information Works! data for Woonsocket Middle School is available at <http://www.rido.net>.

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School Improvement Team Chair

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Principal

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Teacher

Tara Anderson
Teacher

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Teacher

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Teacher

Rev. Luis Lopez
Parent

Obed Lopez
Student

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Assistant Principal

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Teacher

Elaine Zagrodny
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